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Lucia A Keegan 08/31/2006 09:44:17 AM From DB/Inbox: Lucia A Keegan

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Iran Lebanon  
PARIS - Wednesday, August 30, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Iran  
Lebanon

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Domestic social issues dominate today's front pages, but Iran and its tug of war with the West is the day's major international story, with Lebanon and the UNIFIL a close second. Le Figaro entitles an article: "Europe Wants to Dialogue With Iran" in which Alexandrine Bouilhet opposes Europe's wish "to resolve the crisis through negotiations" to the U.S. push "to get sanctions imposed on Iran." Another article prominently features Ambassador Bolton "who wishes, if need be, to impose sanctions outside the jurisdiction of the UNSC, through a 'coalition of the willing.'" The article entitled "Washington Flexes Its Muscles But Seeks a Strategy" also notes the U.S. effort led by Ambassador Nick Burns to draft a new resolution

to halt delivery of "sensitive materials" to Iran. The editorial is entitled "Bringing Iran Around to Negotiations." (See Part C)

An op-ed in Le Figaro entitled "Iran's Ultimate Plan After the Bomb" explains that "Ahmadinejad has no fear of triggering a clash between civilizations" and that "'Iranium' will seek to negotiate after it has acquired the bomb."

Interior Minister Sarkozy pens an op-ed in Le Figaro on France's commitment in Lebanon, today's second major international story: Calling for national unity, Sarkozy's op-ed is a strong endorsement for France's participation in an international peacekeeping force in Lebanon. Noting that the Lebanon issue is part of one of the key axes of French foreign policy (and as such should be off-limits for political jockeying in the run-up to the 2007 elections), Sarkozy characterizes the conflict as "a war provoked by third countries and relayed by radical militias." Sarkozy does, however, insist that mission and lines of command be clearly established in order to avoid the mistakes of pre-1995 interventions in Bosnia. Sarkozy argues convincingly against those who insist that France should stay out of a war that does not concern it, posing the rhetorical question, "What is the alternative?" and concluding "It is absolutely necessary that the people of France as a whole support the mission of our soldiers in Lebanon."

Le Figaro's article on Lebanon details France's "important" and robust deployment of troops and equipment, including its Leclerc tanks, "to break with the tradition of impotence of other UN operations." (See Part C) La Croix devotes a commentary to "introspection" in the Middle East which analyzes the "acknowledgments by Olmert, Nasrallah and Hamas leader Ghazi Hamad of having made errors." (See Part C)

Le Figaro interviews Hussein Haj Hassan, a Hezbollah representative in the Lebanese Parliament, who says "the Lebanese army cannot defend the country ... and the international community must offer something concrete to counterbalance Hezbollah's disarmament..." Hassan adds that "UNIFIL is welcome and that France's role is accepted, despite France's sometimes ambiguous stance..." Hassan also describes Hezbollah's goals: "Give back the Palestinians what is there's..." Hassan also decries the international community's description of the party as "a terrorist movement" and points to the U.S. "as having pushed the Israelis to attack: the Americans' final objective is to eliminate Hezbollah and Hamas, encircle Syria and establish their version of the Middle East. The attempt has failed, but they will try again, with Iran or Syria."

Kofi Annan's visit to Lebanon and Israel is widely reported and his visit to Damascus announced for tomorrow, where he will discuss the deployment of UNIFIL along its border with Lebanon. FR3 focused on his call on the Israeli government to lift the blockade... while TF1 and FR2 emphasized France's role in UNIFIL. FR3 aired a report on Italy's involvement: sending 2,500 soldiers to Lebanon is not just "a diplomatic or a humanitarian gesture; Lebanon is also a big market for Italian companies." This morning, Radio Europe 1 said that "the cease fire in Lebanon was closer to war than peace."

Every outlet reports the accidental explosion of a pipeline in Iraq. In communist l'Humanite the accident is announced on the front page: "Iraq: The Day's Explosion." Inside, the report quotes Secretary Rumsfeld's remarks in Nevada: "We will not say today to 50 million Afghans and Iraqis that because of the difficulties we are facing, we will abandon them to executioners, terrorists, assassins who are the fascists of the 21st century and who try to attack us abroad and at home..."

In an op-ed on the future of the European Union, Economist Pierre Jaillard argues in La Croix that to open the EU to Turkey would be tantamount to abandoning the EU's democratic aspirations for a strategic/economic quagmire. Using the occasion of Montenegro's independence and the dissolution of Yugoslavia as a starting point, Jaillard insists that Europe's common Judeo-Christian heritage is essential to its identity, and that Turkey or Morocco have no place in a common Europe.

Financial La Tribune announces on its front page "a new battle between Boeing and Airbus" over their B737 and A320 programs, respectively. According to La Tribune the stakes are "enormous." Le

Figaro Economie reports that a Russian bank has bought 5% of EADS, the parent company of Airbus.

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Iran

"Bringing Iran Around to Negotiations"

Pierre Rousselin in right-of-center Le Figaro (08/30): "... The international community will have no bearing on Iran until it can set an ultimatum it can stick to... Iran's tactics is to divide the major powers: the U.S. will call for sanctions in which no one believes, the Russians and Chinese will oppose them and France and Europe, caught in the middle, will try to balance things out and find a consensus which does not exist... And once again Tehran is about to get what it wants: more time... Meanwhile Ahmadinejad can threaten to use his own weapons of retaliation, i.e. oil. The recent Lebanese war proves Tehran's capacity for nuisance. It is unfortunate that the offer made before the summer, which offered a dialogue with Iran and which had the support of the U.S., was not accepted. The major powers' goal should not be to bring Iran to bend, but to lead this strategic nation to understand that it is in its own best interest to negotiate. With good diplomacy, this objective is not out of reach."

Lebanon

"France's Heavy Deployment in Lebanon"

Arnaud de La Grange in right-of-center Le Figaro (08/30): "The firepower France is deploying in Lebanon has never been seen outside NATO... The significance of this important deployment is twofold. Politically, France wants to avoid being humiliated by either of the two forces present... But the military choices made by France's generals have also a tactical significance and are a response to Hezbollah's ability to launch missiles... As France awaits the final strategic rules to be set by the UN, one concern remains: deployment on the border with Syria. Beirut opposes it, while Israel is convinced that weapons continue to be delivered to Hezbollah along this border. This is where the highest risks of missteps exist. This is indeed a real time bomb."

"Introspection"

Jean-Christophe Ploquin in Catholic La Croix (08/30): "Necessity has pushed all parties, Olmert, Hezbollah and Hamas to admit they made errors... Anger among their respective constituents has pushed them to speak up. But anger is seldom of good council. This is why finding an out to the crisis is urgent... From Washington to Moscow, Cairo and Paris, the broad lines for resolving the crisis have the solid support of a consensus. Although risks for slippage exist, hope prevails for the Lebanese conflict. Not so for the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians... The goal is to set the negotiations back on track, for Hamas to recognize Israel, give up violence and offer a 'political initiative' at the UN in September. But Hamas's authority is too weak to be able to trigger such changes. This can only happen if another partner comes to recognize its own errors: the Bush Administration, which is not talking as much as it should with the Israelis about the consequences of its choices, and which has given up on the role of mediator which former President Clinton had taken on." STAPLETON